

Love of Nature
Trees, etc.

Drawer

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Personality

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Abraham Lincoln's Personality

Love of Nature

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
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MEMORIAL TREES

Arbor Day has called to mind many trees which have come to be considered Lincoln memorials. Not all of them were set out by Mr. Lincoln, some were giant trees before he was born, others by some peculiar growth in root, branch or leaf have called attention to the familiar profile of the President, while still others note some day, or mark some spot significant in Lincoln history. Inasmuch as Lincoln was known as "The Railsplitter" it seems as if trees do make appropriate Lincoln memorials.

The Birthplace Oak

The old Lincoln Oak on the Rock Spring Farm, Lincoln's birthplace in Kentucky, is the only tree now left which looked down upon the nativity of the Civil War President. It is our most treasured living memorial of him. The tree is in a perfect state of preservation. The trunk has a circumference of sixteen feet at a point six feet above the ground. The branches form a perfect canopy with a spread of more than one hundred feet.

As early as 1805 the tree had been marked as the beginning corner of the three hundred acre tract which David Vance bought from Richard Mather. This was the piece of land which came into the possession of Thomas Lincoln, father of the President, on December 12, 1808. This tree was made the beginning corner of four other farm surveys, and it bore the two initials "D. V." in 1827 the tree was set apart from its contemporaries as described in a survey of that year: "To begin at a noted white oak D. V. Vance's Corner."

The Lunderner Poplar

Lincoln, while President, told a visitor to Washington that he could remember but two landmarks in Kentucky, the state of his birth, when he left there at seven years of age. One was an old stone house, and the other "a great tree somewhere on Nolin River." Dennis Hanks, who lived in the community, wrote to one of his relatives in Kentucky on March 25, 1866, and among his many inquiries was this one: "Is the old Lunderner poplar a-standing yet?" This is undoubtedly the tree which Lincoln remembered. It stood near the old mill site at Buffalo, on one of the branches of Nolin River.

Spencer County Elm

Not far from the Lincoln cabin site, in Spencer County, Indiana, there is a magnificent elm. If the trees were "God's first temples," they were also God's first school-houses. Under the shade of this old tree Lincoln and his sister undoubtedly read Aesop's Fables or worked out some problems in arithmetic. This tree is one of the most historic of the living Lincoln memorials, and is being carefully protected from insects and the elements.

The Indiana Cedars

When Abraham Lincoln was a young man in Indiana he is said to have planted three cedar trees at his home. During the centennial year of Lincoln's birth in 1909 one of these trees blew down and Albert P. Fenn of Tell City, secured the tree from A. P. Rhodes. Mr. Fenn, who was a furniture manufacturer, had the trees made into canes and the following men were said to have received souvenirs made from the tree: William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Watterson, Robert Lincoln, Governor Marshall and Senators Beveridge and Shively.

Springfield Elm

While it is often stated that Lincoln planted the elm tree at his home on the day he left for Washington to be inaugurated, this statement cannot be true because it is shown in a picture he had taken with his sons in front of the house, in the summer of 1860. On Friday night, August 17, 1906, a severe storm struck Springfield and the famous elm was blown over. There is a cross section of

the tree in the museum of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, authenticated by A. S. Edwards, then the caretaker of the Lincoln home.

Beech Broadside

One of the most interesting memorials noting the election of Abraham Lincoln was discovered some years ago by Vincent Robbins, Jr., near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Out in the woods one day he observed some strange markings on a beech tree. It was not difficult to make out the original inscription, although it had been made there over seventy-five years previous to its discovery. The tree had increased in growth four times its size in 1860, but the expanding letters and figures could be easily read. This is the unique announcement:

"1860 Nov. 9—Lincoln is elected—Great God."

White House Maple

In October 1896, a severe storm swept over Washington causing great devastation among the shade trees. One tree which was blown down was known as the "Lincoln Tree," planted by the President shortly after he entered the White House. It was at the end of a row of trees nearly all of which were planted by Presidents. The tree was a maple and grew much more rapidly than the other trees and its great size was largely responsible for its destruction, as there was none higher to protect it. A part of the tree was made into souvenir canes and the stump was allowed to remain, in hopes that it would branch out again.

Assassination Trees

Governor Stone of Iowa declared April 27, 1865, a day of mourning for Abraham Lincoln. John Finn, a citizen of Decorah, Iowa, went to the woods on that day and dug up a hackberry shoot and set it out in memory of the martyred President. In 1920 the tree had attained a height of 110 feet and was nearly 12 feet in circumference. On the very day of Lincoln's death, April 15, 1865, there was set out in Augusta, Maine, under the direction of Mrs. Ruben Partridge, a tree memorial to the martyred President.

A Portrait Tree

For many years one of the most publicized natural memorials of Abraham Lincoln has been an oak tree near Albany, Georgia. It stands on the east side of the Dixie Highway, two miles south of Albany, near Radium Springs. This tree is seventy feet high and nearly seventy years old. When in full leaf its foliage makes a very definite profile of Lincoln. It has never been trimmed to accentuate the likeness.

Roots in Profile

At Lawrence, Kansas, almost within a stone's throw of the University of Kansas, there stands a tree whose roots contribute to the memorialization of Lincoln. The roots extending some distance above the ground are so formed that when an arc street lamp is lighted in the evening the roots cast a shadow upon the lawn which makes a vivid portrait of the Emancipator, with all of his peculiar features correctly visualized.

Giant Sequoia

About the same time that John Bidwell discovered the "Big Trees" of California on November 20, 1841, Abraham Lincoln was beginning to impress those with whom he was associated at Springfield, with the magnitude of his own place in the political arena of Illinois. He would have thought it strange, however, if he had been advised that one of the giant Sequoias was to be named for him. On the Alta Meadow Trail in Giant Forest there stands the "Abe Lincoln" tree which is 270 feet high and is 31 feet in diameter. Abraham Lincoln towered above other men of his day as the giant Sequoia caps the other trees of the forest.

Trees



Your Living Heritage

Abraham

Lincoln

By George W. Goodall


Today is the birthday anniversary of Abraham Lincoln. The nobility of his character has inspired millions of people in many lands. We admire not only his deeds, but the lofty sentiment that he expressed in simple but beautiful language. We ponder over his philosophy of life and wonder how large a part the great outdoors played in the development of his fine character. His early life was cast almost in the wilderness, human companions were relatively few. How could any man live as close to Nature as did Lincoln during the formative period of his life, without absorbing very much from that environment?

In imagination we can see him walking among the great trees of the forest primeval; he stops to listen to the plaintive music of the song birds, or enjoy the lively antics of the squirrels. He picks up an acorn and marvels at the mystery of life that first produced the seed, and then, the towering oak. He must have thought many times, of the challenging forces of life which were everywhere about him.

Lincoln could hardly have escaped some realization of the interdependence of all living things upon one another. He must have marveled at the comprehensive and accurate plan by which Nature moves in all the cycles of life.

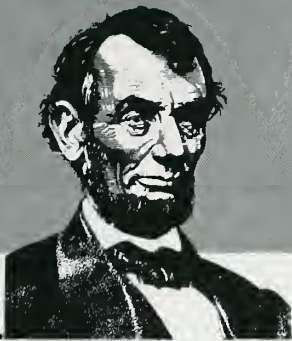
He would not have been Abraham Lincoln if he had not lifted his eyes in admiration of the stalwart trees, among which he grew to manhood. He must have felt their presence. He must have been moved by their graceful and towering beauty. He could not have failed to absorb some of their majesty, and some of their character, because he grew like the rugged oak, with the fineness of the beech and the loftiness of the elm.

IN THE MATURE YEARS of his life, he translated into noble deeds and profound language the very essence of that primitive culture, which he received at Nature's shrine. From such a source, there could easily and naturally come the elements of true greatness.



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Lincoln Lore

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A Tree Grew In Springfield

An elm tree once stood next to the sidewalk in front of the Lincoln home in Springfield. It was located very near the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets. Local tradition relates that the tree was planted by Abraham Lincoln sometime before he was elected to the Presidency.

The Lincolns moved into their home in the Spring of 1844. The future President purchased the property from the Reverend Charles Dresser, an Episcopal clergyman, who constructed the house in 1839. There is every indication that there was some refurbishing of the property in 1844. However, if Lincoln did not plant the tree at the time he purchased the house, he may have done so in the early months of 1856, when the one and one-half story building was converted into a full two-story structure.

While the elm tree never achieved an exceptionally large growth, it did successfully weather the elements of nature for a period of some fifty or sixty years; and today portions of its branches have been sawed up into picture frames, and from its wood there have been carved innumerable souvenirs.

For awhile, its stump was in storage at the Illinois State Historical Library, but it has since been lost or destroyed. The following statement concerning the tree stump, signed by a custodian of the Lincoln home, has been discovered on the back of a photograph of the Lincoln home which prominently featured the elm:

Lincoln Home
430 South 8th Street

Springfield, Illinois
February 1, 1922

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that this stump was taken from an elm tree which stood in front of the Lincoln Home, 430 South 8th St., Springfield, Illinois, as shown in the attached photograph, and according to information received from relatives and others who were personally acquainted with Mr. Lincoln, the tree was planted by him before he was elected President. This tree, then a small sapling, is shown in the photograph of the Lincoln Home



Photograph distributed by Osborn H. Oldroyd, the first custodian (1887-1893) of the Lincoln home.



Photograph bearing rubber stamp "Oldroyd."



Photograph by J. A. Whipple, Springfield, Summer, 1860 (0-39)



Oldroyd wrote on the back of this photograph: "Abraham Lincoln purchased this house in 1844 and lived in it until 1861."

taken before Mr. Lincoln was elected President and the photo is now on exhibit at the Homestead.

Mary Edwards Brown

Custodian of Lincoln Home

Lincoln liked trees, and on one occasion in his public career he mentioned in an address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, (September 30, 1859) "... trees, shrubs, fruits, plants, and flowers — the thousand things of which these are specimens — each a world of study within itself."

An anonymous author has expressed very vividly Lincoln's interest in trees:

"Trees were friendly things. As a youth, everywhere he (Lincoln) went were the trees of the primeval forest . . . tulips, sycamores, oaks, elms, maples, beeches and walnuts.

"Trees made the flatboats that gave him passage down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

"Trees made the cabins that gave him shelter in bleak weather.

"Trees fed the fire that gave him warmth and lighted the pages of his books.

"Trees made for him a bed of leaves.

"Trees gave him the sugar of the maples, the brown nuts of autumn.

"Trees drove out the mosquitoes with their pungent log-fire smoke.

"Trees drove back the wolf and the panther with their glowing pine knots.

"Yes, and trees made for him crude chairs, tables, beds, axe-helves, ox-yokes, cradles, coffins.

"Trees gave him the rails of walnut and black locust.

"His companionship with trees is attested by the fact that it was his title, 'The Railsplitter,' which helped to carry him to the White House in the presidential campaign of 1860."

Lincoln, while President, told a visitor to Washington that he could remember but two landmarks in Kentucky, the State of his birth, when he left there at seven years of age. One was an old stone house, and the other, "a great tree somewhere on Nolin River."

It is believed the old tree Lincoln remembered so well was a Lunderner poplar, located near an old mill site at Buffalo, Kentucky, on one of the branches of Nolin River. In the 1920s there were still living in Larue County a few old residents who remembered hearing of this famous giant tree, the name being a local term used to designate the English black poplar.

While Lincoln always remembered the great Lunderner poplar in Kentucky, his favorite tree was the hard maple. To Lincoln, the hard maple had a quality of beauty that was always a gratification to his concept of what constituted a triumph of nature. It was Charles F. Mills, Secretary of the State Board of Agriculture, Springfield, Illinois, who inquired of Lincoln's son regarding the President's favorite tree. Robert T. Lincoln, on March 30, 1888, wrote Mr. Mills: "In reply to your favor of yesterday, I remember having heard my father speak more specially of the hard maple as a tree which gratified him by its beauty."

Yet, Lincoln selected an elm for his Springfield home, and the December 3, 1899 issue of the *New York Tribune* published a tribute to the "Noble Tree Lincoln Planted:"

You stand within the shade of a tree at Springfield, Ill. It is, somehow, different from any other tree, and yet you may have stood within the shade of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other trees.

You put your hand gently upon that tree. It is far different from any other tree you may have touched, and yet you may have touched hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other trees — trees of the same species of wood, trees similar in size, and trees much larger and those much smaller, but you never touched a tree as gently, as reverently, as you did this one.

You look at the tree and study it. You have seen thousands of trees of natural origin and growth and those planted with human hands — trees for surpassing this one in their beauty in architecture or more queer in the manner in which nature had fixed their trunks and branches.

It is a fruit tree. It bears the year round and every day. Fruit has been gathered from it by many thousands of people, and its quantity has never been diminished. The supply is inexhaustible. The fruit is of a kind that does not satisfy the hunger but increases it. You cannot see the fruit, but you can gather it.

It is grandly inspiring to look upon that tree, and yet it has not a single element of the majesty we hear spoken of trees. It would be a tree without an admirer did it stand unknown in the forests or in some orchard or favorite park. If it were like other trees it might be cut down, but not for the value of the lumber to be gotten out of it; it would be for its use as fuel, or for the purpose of replacing it with one more beautiful — and yet no man will ever be so mean as to cut this tree down, nor a man, woman, or child be so unthoughtful

(Continued on page 4)



Osborn H. Oldroyd standing near the elm before the Lincoln home. On the back of this photograph he wrote, "I moved (1883) into this house (the home of President Lincoln when he was elected President) with my collection of Lincoln memorials relating to the martyred."



This photograph bears the date of June 8, 1889. The branches of the tree indicate that it has undergone considerable trimming.



The excessive trimming of the elm tree, as indicated by this photograph, would lead one to believe that it would not have long to live.



Following the storm of August 17, 1906, the stump of the elm tree was allowed to stand for a short period. This photograph was taken in 1907.

Lincoln's elm in its various stages of growth has furnished a proper measuring rod for a chronological arrangement of the many photographs that have been taken of the Springfield home. Illustrating this article are eight photographs, taken from the Foundation's files, which depict the elm tree. Some can be dated.

Lincoln, the Nature Lover

Great Emancipator Drew Homely Aphorisms from Observance of Trees

BEAUTY in trees is not confined to their summer leafage, nor their use to that of providing shade and timber. Now in their leafless stage they are eloquent in their manifold type of branching, their barks and the tracery of their buds against the winter sky, to those who have observing eyes.

Lincoln had those observing eyes and expressed a preference for trees when not in leaf. Their impression upon him gave rise to homely aphorisms. Walking through a heavy snow in Virginia, with Noah Brooks, a newspaperman, Lincoln remarked "I like trees best when they are not in leaf, as their anatomy can then be studied." Then he called attention to a tree against the sky and pointing to the fine network of shadows cast on the snow by the branches and twigs, he said that was the profile of the tree.

The next day, according to the writings of Brooks, when a discussion arose as to the difference between character and reputation, Lincoln observed "Perhaps a man's character is like a tree and his reputation like the shadow. The

shadow is what we think it; the tree is the real thing."

On another occasion, wrote Brooks, in riding through Virginia, Lincoln observed a vine which wrapped a tree in its luxuriant growth. "Yes," said Lincoln, "that is very beautiful, but that vine is like certain habits of men; it decorates the ruins that it makes."

Talking about woodcraft, Lincoln said he did not remember splitting many rails in his life and that rail fences were not in his line, though he was proud of his record as a woodsman. Reminded that he had authenticated some rails as of his splitting during the Lincoln and Hamilton campaign, he remarked "No, I didn't. They brought those rails in where I was, with a great hurrah and what I did say was that if I ever split any rails on the piece of ground that those rails came from (and I was not sure whether I had or not), I was sure those were the rails."

Fortunately, we do not have to be a Lincoln to see beauty in trees in winter so look around, study them and plan to plant those that you admire when transplanting times comes in spring.
